

The Athenian Mercury.

Saturday, March 24. 1694.

Quest. 1. *In the Parish Church to which I resort, I observe to my great Trouble several Persons who seem very Devout at the Prayers of the Church, but no sooner the Preacher begins his Sermon but some of 'em set themselves to sleep, some to read in the Bible, and perhaps News-Letters, others spend most of the time in gazing about 'em, or talking with one another: I have sometimes reprov'd some of 'em for this their irreverend Behaviour, who have reply'd they do not much matter Preaching, because, as they think, 'tis no part of Religious Worship, nor are Sermons, they think, now needfull: On the whole I desire your Answer to these following Questions:*

1. *Whether this rude and undecent Behaviour don't shew great Contempt of God and his Ordinance?*

2. *Whether the Prayers of such Persons are likely to prove successful, in regard 'tis said, Prov. 28. 9. He that turneth away his Ear from hearing the Law, even his Prayer shall be turned into Abomination?*

3. *Whether the Preacher ought not to reprove them publickly before the Congregation for such Behaviour?*

4. *Whether you think Preaching, as it has been practis'd in the Church of England ever since the Reformation, be not needfull in our days? Your Answer to these Queries, together with some short Directions concerning our Behaviour in Sermon-time, may both Oblige and Benefit many, and in particular HER who is, &c.*

Answe. We think it most convenient to alter the Method of the Queries, and reply first to the last, because the other three have such a dependance upon it — *Whether Preaching be not needfull in our days?* And we shall prove the Affirmative, first from Scripture, then from Reason, lastly from the Authority, Judgment and Practice of the Church of England. From Scripture, 28 St. Matth. 19, 20. *Go and Disciple all Nations, baptizing 'em, &c. teaching them to observe all things, and lo I am with you even unto the End of the World:* Here is Teaching made a positive Institution or Ordinance of Christ, and that after all Nations are Profelyted and Baptized, therefore not only Necessary to Jews and Heathens, (and so St. Paul preach'd to Saints as well as Infidels) and this to last to the End of the World. And Reason is as clear, there being other Ends of Preaching besides Converting Heathens, as Converting such as are call'd Christians, from the Errors of their ways, or to suanme up all in the words of an Ingenious Writer on this Subject, "There are (and still will be in the Church of God) "Young to be initiated, Adult to be Confirm'd, Weak "to be strengthen'd, Doubting to be resolv'd and settl'd, "Pious to be directed, Wicked to be reprov'd, Heretics and Erroneous to be Confuted and withstood, "and Preaching (he goes on) is the ordinary means "which God has appointed to minister to such Occasions — And indeed those are very full of themselves who think they already know as much or more than the Parson can teach 'em, tho' taking that for granted, and that they don't need to have the Arguments for Humility and other Graces anew brought before 'em, or Directions for the Practice thereof, yet they'll grant the most part of Mankind han't so much Sense as they, and therefore need it, and for this Reason their Presence at Sermons, and decent Behaviour in them, are both requisite. And there's no Question, I suppose, but that this is so much the Judgment as well as Practice of the Church of England, that none who pretend to be Members of it can any ways excuse themselves from thinking otherwise, without owning themselves at the same time guilty of the most scandalous Ignorance in relation to her Constitution, notwithstanding all their appearing Devotion and fancy'd Knowledge: For first the Church has enjoynd us in the Prayer to be said every Day in the Ember-Weeks for those who are to be admitted into Ho-

ly Orders, (in which these Persons themselves must have join'd if they ever were at Church all the while they were used) to desire "Almighty God to look on "his Church, &c. and at that time so to Govern the "Minds of the Bishops and Pastors, that they may "lay Hands suddenly on no Man, &c. and to those "which shall be Ordain'd, to give his Grace, that both "in their Life and Doctrine they may set forth his "Glory, and set forward the Salvation of all Men. Accordingly in the very Form of Ordination, the Deacons, if permitted, and Priests positively have [Authority to Preach the Word of God] which is a pretty fair Argument that the Church thinks there's need of it. But further, the Office of Preacher, or Preaching, is mention'd in the Canons above sixty times, on one occasion or another: In the 47th. Canon, "Every Benefic'd Man licens'd "on urgent Occasions not to reside, is to cause his Cure "to be supply'd by a sufficient and Licens'd Preacher, if the Worth of the Benefice will bear it; and if Resident, by Canon 45th. to Preach himself every Sunday: And in Canon 18. Of Reverence and Attention to be used within the Church, &c. there are these remarkable Expressions, "None, either Man, Woman, or Child, of "what Calling soever, shall be otherwise busied in "the Church than in quiet Attendance to hear, mark "and understand that which is read, PREACHED or "Ministr'd — Neither shall they disturb the Service "or SERMON by Walking or TALKING, or any other way — Thus far the Canons: And now let those concern'd either reform so ill a Practice, or no longer scandalize the Church of England with pretending to be Members thereof.

Now to the first Question, *Whether such a Behaviour does not shew great Contempt of God and his Ordinance?* and this is easily Answer'd in the Affirmative: If of God's Ordinance, then of God himself; but those are guilty of manifest Contempt of an Ordinance with a witness, who think there's no need on't in the Church of God, nay of Christ himself who Instituted it; and thought there wou'd be need on't, or else he wou'd not have promis'd Assistance in it, even to the End of the World: But here we may fitly Answer an Objection; *Preaching, say some, is no part of Religious Worship:* First, Suppose this, that it were not in a precise Sense, an *Act of Worship*, wou'd it thence follow that 'twas unnecessary, or that we may behave our selves indecently while 'tis performing? By no means, since we have already prov'd it a *sacred Constitution*, and as sure 'tis plain that 'tis Necessary, and commands our *Attention and Reverence*. But further, we believe they are mistaken, for what do they mean by the very word *Worship*, but an expression of *Honour*, or *Acknowledgment of Emi-* nence, or dependance, either toward God or Man; if to Man, 'tis *Civil*, if to God, *Religious*, Preaching or Declaring God's Will is such an Honour, and so is attentively and Reverently Hearing it; so that in every Sermon here is or shou'd be two *Acts of Worship*, so far is it from being *No Worship* at all.

As to the third Query, *Whether the Prayers of such Persons are like to prove successful?* there needs no other Answer than the Text you have brought positively against 'em, nor must they therefore expect to gain any Advantage by them, unless they cou'd entirely raze this Scripture out of the Bible.

For Rules of Hearing profitably, our Paper admits little more, and We must refer the Reader to that Excellent Book, *The Whole Duty*

Duty of Man. Sund. II. Of Gods Word; where he'll also find in a very few words, several unanswerable Arguments for the *Necessity of Preaching*. All we can here add, is briefly this: 1. Pray privately for God's Blessing, and Hope for't, before you come there. 2. Read the Parable of the Sower in 13 St. *Matt.* and our Saviours Explanations of it, and endeavour to avoid whatever will render the Word *unfruitful*. 3. Be devout in Publick Prayers. 4. Attent and Reverend in Body and Mind in the Sermons, considering it as the Word of God, and not of Man — never *making Faults* where there are none, and if you find any real ones, passing 'em by, and minding what more concerns you. 5. Particularly regard, and endeavour to fix on your Mind what more especially relates to your self, and the Condition of your own Mind. 6. Ben't eager to hear *many Sermons*, since a few well digest'd are much more profitable. 7. Fall not into Conversation as soon as the Sermon is over, but *retire* and recollect. 8. Reduce what you hear into *Practice*: You are so much the better for *Sermons* as you live better. *Be ye Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, deceiving your own Souls.*

Ques. 2. How shall an Illiterate Person have any certainty of attaining a Happier State, the Examples of Men of great Profession are often a stumbling-block, and we see daily that the Teachers and Heads of the People live as unthinking and remiss Lives as any?

Answ. That if we are Convinc'd there is a God, and consequently that he has left us an unerring Rule to walk by, writ immediately by the Inspiration of his Holy Spirit; and that the Scriptures are such, we have reason to believe, being preserv'd thro' all Ages, whenas many other Writings much valued by Men, have been totally lost: They were Indited by the Holy Ghost no doubt, for good Men woud not impose such things upon the World, and there's too much against the bad to believe them the Authors thereof, and the like for good and bad Angels, therefore it remains indisputable.

Advertisements.

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WHereas a Sale of fine Lace and Point, was intended to be made, the 20th. of this Instant March, at Curriers-Hall, near Cripple-gate; Books being not quite full, it is put off till the 10th. of May, after which time no Tickets will be Deliver'd out. Proposals may be had of Mr. Ashfield at the Bell a Grocer in Bedford-street, in Covent-garden, Mr. Rose Sword-Cuiler at the Sign of the Two Eagles in Ludgate-street, Mr. Ambrouz at the Pestle and Mortar in Panton-street near Leicester-Fields, Mr. Burford Apothecary at the Sun in Leaden-Hall-street, and at Mrs. Fawconers over against the Conduit in Alderman-bury.

THIS is to give Notice, to all Ladies and Others, that Mr. Pouller, Living at the Sign of the *Pearl* in *Hants-Court* in *Castel street*, Sells and Makes all Sorts and Sizes of French Pearls at Reasonable Rates, as also all manner of Pearl Ear-rings; he is very Ingenious in making Wax Pictures both Little and Great; and if any body will take the Trouble to come to his Lodging; he will shew them the King and Queens Pictures in Wax, as big as their Natural Proportion.